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ABSTRACT

The enrollment growth in higher education is slowing down. While the decline can be viewed as part of a long-term growth cycle, institutions still need to find students. Institutions may find students by expanding their educational mission, by ascertaining the instructional needs of a variety of students, and by offering the appropriate services in a convenient manner. Some colleges and universities are willing to consider "new market" students, described as housewives, blue collar workers, elderly or retired persons, and college or high school dropouts. The great majority of new market students are over 25 and as such require a variety of learning options. Several institutions have perceived the different needs of the new potential clientele, and examples are provided of programs where the requirements of new market students have been identified and met with offerings from alert schools. Discussed in this pamphlet concerning new market students are sections covering: enrollment and the marketplace; marketing as a responsive strategy; adults as new market students; and institutional examples of new market students' programs. (Author/PG)

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Research Currents

MARKETING HIGHER EDUCATION TO NEW STUDENTS

by David A. Trivett

The enrollment growth in higher education is slowing down. While the decline can be viewed as part of a long-term growth cycle, institutions still need to find students. Changing values among youth and new desires among adults have complicated the search. Institutions may find students by expanding their educational mission, by ascertaining the instructional needs of a variety of students, and by offering the appropriate services in a convenient manner. Some colleges and universities are willing to consider "new market" students, who are described as:

> minority group persons, housewives, veterans, blue collar workers, elderly and retired persons, and college and high school dropouts. Though some of these persons are in the 18-25 year age range, the great majority are over 25, and consequently, will require a variety of new learning options, rather than the mere extension of existing programs designed with younger students in mind (*Report from the Presidential Committee on New Market Students* 1973, p. 3).

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ENROLLMENT AND THE MARKETPLACE

The causes of the levelling-off of enrollment in higher education have received widespread attention. Leslie and Miller (1974) believe higher education is in a state of dynamic equilibrium or "steady state" characterized by open systems interacting with their environments (p. 4). They see a "transverse progression" or long-term pattern of growth composed of alternating periods of growth and slowdown as the fitting description of enrollment change in U.S. higher education. Corrections, changes, and innovations will be part of the adaptive behavior employed by higher education to restore growth (p. 22). One type of possible innovation is the exploration of new student markets. As Leslie and Miller see it, "Although the attraction of new students ultimately may also require new job markets for graduates, of direct and immediate concern to higher education institutions is simply the recruitment of greater numbers. To institutions, new students represent a life-sustaining flow of resources" (p. 34).

Recent enrollment trends substantiate the low growth rate presently occurring in higher education. Parker (1974a), in a survey covering 90 percent of the eligible senior institutions for 1973-74, found an increase of enrollment for all categories of 1.8 percent (p. 319); however, enrollment subcategories show important variations. Thus, while the increase of fulltime students was 0.4 percent, taken as a whole, the 1,416 institutions surveyed show parttime enrollments rose close to 6 percent (p. 328). The multipurpose schools (such as former state teachers colleges) experienced an enrollment decline for 1973-1974 of 1.6 percent (p. 320) and private complex universities had only a 0.2 percent growth (p. 321). While independent arts and science colleges declined in enrollment only 1.3 percent, this was exacerbated by a decline in freshmen enrollment of 3 percent (p. 322). However, the arts and science college parttime enrollment increased by 6.8 percent. Parker observes that it will be essential for traditional four-year colleges and universities to exploit their capacity to serve students on a parttime basis, particularly to meet the need of adults for increased educational opportunity.

The enrollment trends no doubt reflect a variety of societal influences. Changes have occurred in values of college-age youth since 1967. Yankelovitch (1974) found that the "most disaffected" youth were high school graduates who had gone directly into marriage, work or both and who now have aligned themselves with the college student values of the late sixties. On campus, however, college students are now less interested in "reform" and seem "preoccupied with their own career planning and personal self-fulfillment" (p. 45). College students now seek to merge new personal values with old careers. Along with young blue-collar workers, they seek "interesting" work as well as work that pays well, self-fulfilling work, and economic security.

The learning interests of adults also may influence enroll-

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ment trends. The Commission on Non-Traditional Study sponsored a survey by Carp, Peterson, and Roelfs (1974) on the educational interests and activities of American adults between the ages of 18 and 60, not including those who were engaged in fulltime study. Seventy-seven percent of the sample affirmed there was something they wanted to know more about or wanted to learn how to do better (p. 15). These "would-be-learners" were then asked to note topics of interest from a list of 48. After classification of responses, it was apparent that 78 percent of the choices were vocational subjects, excluding agriculture; the next highest category of choice was "hobbies and recreation," with 63 percent. "General education" categories represented close to 50 percent (pp. 18-19). However, when "first choices only" were asked for, vocational subjects represented 43 percent, hobbies and recreation 13 percent, and general education 13 percent. From the total sample, 31 percent of the respondents reported they had actually received instruction in the past twelve months and were designated "learners" (p. 15). Of these, 95 percent wished to continue their learning. Close to 42 percent of the "learners" had studied something in the area of "hobbies and recreation," 25 percent in "general education," and 35 percent had studied vocational subjects (p. 24). Those adults who chose to learn something in the year preceding the survey tended to be well educated, as some 42 percent of the "learners" had at least some postsecondary education (p. 17). However, there is evidence that the preferences of adult learners "clearly center on practical and often job-related topics" (p. 21). With respect to the method of learning, "learners" and "would-be-learners" both preferred lectures and classes rather than more solitary formats (p. 31). Generally there is an interest in credit for studies on the part of adults who already have some type of postsecondary education; however, the attraction to course content or participation is greater than the desire for credit (p. 50). Adult interest in learning is strong, but may not be directed toward traditional subjects.

Declining enrollment, new values, and new interests all affect institutions. Several solutions are available for those colleges that now face the enrollment trauma, and most of them involve the development of new student markets.

MARKETING AS A RESPONSIVE STRATEGY

Although colleges and universities have adopted a variety of practices from business in the past few years, marketing—"the concept of uncovering specific needs, satisfying these needs by the development of appropriate goods and services, letting people know of their availability, and offering them at appropriate prices, at the right time and place"—has not been widely used (Krachenberg 1972, p. 380). Market groups such as students, alumni, government, and the public must be targeted and analyzed by each institution to suit its best interests. What do these constituencies want, what are their needs, and when and where do they want educational products and services (p. 371)? Published information can be analyzed to provide clues, but a more sophisticated approach includes the creation of data about markets and analysis of external factors influencing those markets. Krachenberg sees value in research about students, curricula, and academic programs done at the school, college, or department level. While the institution must maintain its own identity, market research facilitates serving its clientele more effectively and possibly will enable the institution to survive (p. 373). Noncollegiate institutions of all types are finding broader definitions for what they offer society; colleges should not be reluctant to do so. Specifically, they should consider whether they are created solely to teach 18 to 25 year olds in fulltime day programs, or if a broader function is implied in their role? In this regard, a broader concept of who can be served, when, and where, would permit the determination of a "product market mix" that efficiently utilizes what the institution offers (pp. 374-75). An overall marketing approach would use the supporting components of promotion, distribution, and pricing. Thus, different programs not only have different costs (that might be reflected in pricing), but they also might appeal to different markets to which specific communication appeals could be addressed (pp. 377-78). Using strategies from marketing to develop information, Krachenberg sees institutions and their components developing better programs, selling these to their boards, receiving financial support to implement them, and selling them to the right market groups (p. 379).

Wolf (1973) advocates the use of marketing approaches for the development of student clientele. In his view several general principles apply to college and university admissions efforts. One is to "adjust plans to a changing environment (p. 2)"; another is to "make consumer-oriented plans and policies (p. 3)." A third, to "match the mission to the market (p. 3)," requires the clear definition of an institution's capabilities and the identification of market segments that permit success for the institution's mission. One specific recommendation is a change in attitude and policy toward transfer students, with better admissions policies, closer relationships to feeder institutions, and feedback to those institutions on the success of their students. The admissions office staff may have to change their attitude toward potential students from "traffic" to "customers to be served" (p. 4).

The potential value of marketing approaches for higher education might be deduced from the experience of one type of educational institution now increasingly in competition with higher education, the proprietary school. These schools have responded flexibly to new markets over the years. In fact their survival has depended on the creation of new student markets. Furthermore, they have specialized in using marketing techniques to reach those groups of students traditionally untapped by higher education (Trivett 1974b, pp. 4-7, 45-46).

ADULTS AS NEW MARKET STUDENTS

For those institutions that decide a broader spectrum of students is consistent with their purpose, the adult market is often proposed as a source of students and revenue. One encouraging fact is that adults over 35 are returning to college. Based on data from an October 1972 Current Population Survey, Young (1973) estimates that 1.5 million adults over 35 were enrolled or attending school in October 1972. Of that number, over half were in college or graduate school (and these figures include only students working on a degree or training for an occupation and exclude armed forces personnel and prison inmates) (p. 39). Among the adults attending college, 53 percent were women. Eighty percent of

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the men were parttime and, of these, 98 percent were in the labor force. A majority of the women in college were also enrolled parttime and of them 75 percent were working or seeking work (pp. 39-41). These data suggest that the adult students already enrolled are primarily parttimer's who need courses offered before or after work hours.

Institutions use various techniques to "woo" the adult student. For example, the University of Bridgeport offers a "listener's license" that, for a fee, permits students to visit classes during the semester, with the hope that their interest will be whetted and they will enroll in classes (Adams 1973, p. 9-10). Because adult education programs are traditionally self-supporting, they are attractive to institutions. However, realistic counseling and good scheduling of courses have been found essential for adult program success (pp. 12-14).

Adult program success may also be keyed to the identification of specific shares or segments of the market. For example, Fordham University has a degree completion program for stewardesses, who are mature students that need flexible scheduling. The University allows makeup classes and provides tutorials and tape sessions (Ricklefs 1974, p. 23). Other programs have been aimed at government employees needing up-dates on legislation. Ricklefs notes that a large number of students have completed some college and would like to finish a degree program; this results in pressure for life-experience credit that colleges must match with common sense. He pictures financial relief growing from the provision of rewarding educational experiences for adults (pp. 24-26).

The parttime adult student in postsecondary education also has been the subject of recent attention. The Committee on the Financing of Higher Education for Adult Students based their study on the premise that all students in postsecondary institutions are now adults with adult responsibilities; previous distinctions between fulltime regular students and parttime "adult" students could no longer be sustained (*Financing Part-Time Students* . . . 1974, p. 23). Differences between these two categories of students boil down to the fulltime employment of parttimer's and their purposeful willingness to take noncredit courses. Refuting what they perceive as a long-standing frivolous image of parttime students, the Committee reports:

> The part-time student appears to have equally or more serious motivations in terms of subject matter and occupational motivations for participation and drops out with less frequency; the part-time student has equal intellectual ability and more accrued experience to profit from exposure to academic learning; the part-time student achieves as well or better in academic performance (p. 38).

In view of the present status of parttime students as the "new majority," the Committee questions the equity of the historical emphasis on fulltime students and massive discrimination against them in student aid and other regulations (pp. 47, 59).

Another large segment of the adult education market is women, with many who are over 25 returning to college. Answers to questions about why they return to college and what they plan to do with their education after returning might be helpful in assessing women as a new market source. Durchholz and O'Connor (1973) surveyed 245 women who were continuing their education at the University of Cincinnati. With a response rate of 75 percent, they found that these 25-years-or-older undergraduate day students were preparing for employment (35 percent) or striving to fulfill a need or desire for education or achievement (30 percent) (p. 52). Close to half of the sample hoped to achieve a degree beyond the B.A. and they were making progress toward their degree objectives. The women students' replies indicated that their education program was a serious endeavor in their lives and in most instances (72 percent) they had definite plans to work upon graduation.

Veterans are another category of adult student whose need for education may provide opportunity for a college to find new students. In comparison with World War II veterans, Vietnam veterans have utilized their educational benefits at a much lower rate (Stocker 1972, p. 19). One problem may be how to motivate veterans to increase their own opportunities and take a chance on education: clear admission procedures, a warm reception, and the demonstrated interest from the institution are needed (pp. 18-22). (Institutions considering programs for veterans may wish to consult Binsacca 1973; Betts 1973; and Servicemen's Opportunity College . . . [1974].)

The interest and serious intent of the adult student described in these studies—the returning women students, the working parttimer, the veteran, or some previously untapped market group, such as Fordham's program for stewardesses—should make them attractive to institutions seeking to foster growth in their undergraduate or graduate enrollment.

INSTITUTIONAL EXAMPLES

Numerous colleges and universities have used a marketing approach to find new markets and new students. One example of an institutional discovery of new markets is found in Hruby's *Survival Kit for Invisible Colleges* (1973). Hruby describes how his institution was trapped by enrollment growth during the early fifties and sixties and found itself with declining fulltime enrollments as the seventies began. However, by 1973 the fulltime equivalent enrollment had reached a peak because the college recognized "responsibilities to other potential student clienteles whom [they had] not previously served" (Hruby, p. 5). The development of new clientele was accomplished after a thorough self-study that included a detailed assessment of strengths and weaknesses. When the institution had decided upon a direction, the search for new clientele began, a responsibility Hruby assigned to the administration with these words:

> With opportunism as a technique, not as a philosophy, the administration must generate a high degree of sophistication about its potential new markets in the community (p. 17).

New markets were developed using the principles (1) that the community could be served, (2) underutilized personnel employed, (3) college-level education needs filled, and (4) these needs and resources brought together by the college functioning as broker (p. 17). Although in some cases serving the new clientele required a fundamental shift in the disposition of administration and faculty, the college always attempted to begin with "an educational need for which there [was] a known and an accessible clientele" (p. 28). Hruby provides eight examples of programs that worked. Among these are degree programs for women without degrees who have previously attended college, degree programs for young working people seeking "career-oriented" college work, credentialing programs for skilled workers, motivational and remedial programs for underachieving high

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school students, and an external degree program for "ex-alumni" (former students without degrees), and physical fitness programs for the community (pp. 28-30).

Another institution has created a new market by analyzing when available students might be able to attend college. The "Weekend College" of C. W. Post Center of Long Island University offers 150 courses in combinations of weekend course sessions, such as six six-hour sessions. The program is geared to the needs, problems, and fears of adult students and offers courses with the adult student in mind, such as speed reading and study skills (Stashower 1974, pp. 30-31; Meskill 1973).

Although not necessarily a tapping of the adult market, many private colleges have found new market students by designing special programs to accommodate transfer students. With one in four undergraduate students transferring in recent years, programs to attract transfer students through publicity, less red-tape, financial aid, counseling, and special curricula have had positive results (Trivett 1974a, pp. 1-3).

CONCLUSION

The enrollment pattern of U.S. higher education has been described in terms of cyclical growth and slowdown. If that is a fitting description, continued social usefulness and innovative strategies will enable higher education institutions to survive, although perhaps not in their present form. In the meantime, specific institutions need students. The changing values among college-age youth and the continued interest of a preponderance of "adults" in vocational or career-oriented learning make it unlikely that massive numbers of traditional students will *buy* conventional higher education in its customary packaging. Concepts from marketing suggest that an institution with a broad perception of its purpose as well as agreement on the pursuit of a sufficiently inclusive mission may combine these assets to meet the learning needs of heretofore unserved market groups. Attention can be directed to the new market students, such as college dropouts who want to return for degrees, parttime students who need classes after working hours, women returning to career life, or veterans who need encouragement to return to the classroom. This approach has been used by community colleges, adult educators, proprietary schools and by numerous colleges and universities. Yet there is no reason why more colleges and universities could not successfully join the commitment "that higher education should serve a more diverse population than it traditionally has, and that such an education should be at times, in places and, in some cases, with methods that have not been traditional (*Meeting the Needs of Non-Traditional Students* 1974, p. 1).

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